Espionage activities by U.S. diplomats

477. SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI:
SHRI SHIV CHARAN SINGH:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether two U.S. displomats were asked to leave India in the last week of December, 1996 and 1st week of January, 1997 after it was discovered that an Indian intelligence official was maintaining unauthorised contacts with them;

(b) the time since when this espionage act was going on; and

(c) the steps taken to check such activities in future?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) and (b) Following reports of unauthorized contacts over a period of time between a senior Home Ministry official and some diplomats based in the US Embassy in New Delhi, Government asked for the withdrawal of the concerned US officials.

(c) The action speaks for the seriousness with which Government has viewed this matter. Government take all steps necessary to safeguard national security.

Improving Indo-Pak relations

478. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN:
SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have sent any non-official delegation of important personalities and Members of Parliament to Pakistan to develop relations between the two countries; and

(b) if not, whether Government are considering such a proposal so that person-to-person contacts between the people of two countries may develop leading to better relations between the countries?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Government are committed to the improvement of relations with Pakistan and are following a policy of encouraging people-to-people contacts. Government have taken a number of unilateral measures to promote interaction amongst academicians, scholars, intellectuals and journalists of the two countries. Towards this end, Government have taken steps to facilitate the processing, by our High Commission in Islamabad, of a larger number of visa publications of Pakistani nationals desirous of visiting India.

Placing Haj Committee report before Parliament

479. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Haj Committee which has been constituted under the Haj Committee Act has been preparing its annual reports, Audited accounts and performance reports and laying it before the Parliament.

(b) if no, the reason for not placing the annual report of the Committee before the Parliament; and

(c) whether Government would consider placing the report, as the Committee is dealing with the funds of Haj Pilgrims worth more than 100 crores per annum and that it should be accountable to Parliament.

THE HINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) Central Haj Committee prepares its annual report including performance report and the accounts which are submitted to the Government. The accounts are audited by the Principal Director of Audit (Central). The annual report including the performance report and the audited accounts are not placed before Parliament.

(b) and (c) Central Haj Committee is a statutory body constituted under the Haj Committee Act of 1959, which has no provision for laying the annual report of the Central Haj Committee before Parliament.